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ABSTRACT

Influences that have had significant effect on North Carolina Central University, a historically black university with a liberal arts tradition, are examined. The following topics are considered: events relating to the university's founding; circumstances affecting the transition of the university from a private normal school to a public institution; the transition of the institution from a public normal school to a public liberal arts college; and events surrounding the establishment of graduate and professional programs. It is concluded that the events that took place during the first 50 years of the existence of the university clearly demonstrate how outside influences tend to affect the developmental directions of an institution. The founding of the university grew out of the depressive conditions of the time, and its transition to a public normal school was a result of a need for an additional state normal school to train black teachers and a well-orchestrated campaign carried out by the founder. The transition to a liberal arts college was the result of another campaign and the need for the state to provide a liberal arts program for black citizens. The authorization for graduate and professional programs was made in order to perpetuate the existing social order that mandated that blacks and members of the majority groups be educated in separate institutions. (SW)

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A DISCUSSION OF EVENTS WHICH INFLUENCED THE DEVELOPMENTAL DIRECTIONS OF NORTH CAROLINA CENTRAL UNIVERSITY

By
Joseph E. Fleming *

North Carolina Central University, located in Durham, North Carolina, is one of the sixteen institutions which, together with the other members, make up the University of North Carolina System, the state's tax-supported system of higher education. North Carolina Central University is a historically Black university with a liberal arts tradition. The more than four thousand students are enrolled in five schools: The Undergraduate and Graduate Schools of Arts and Science, the School of Business, the School of Law, and the School of Library Science.

James E. Shepard founded North Carolina Central University in 1910 as the National Training School and Chautauqua, a non-sectarian school with a religious orientation. In 1925, North Carolina Central became the first state-supported liberal arts college for Black people in the United States. It was then called North Carolina College for Negroes. In 1969, the name was changed to North Carolina Central University, and in 1972, the University became, along with fifteen other state-supported senior institutions, part of the University of North Carolina System.

The main objective here was to examine the proposition that outside influences, such as custom, social and political conditions had direct bearing

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upon the developmental directions of North Carolina Central University as an institution of higher learning. It is assumed by the writer that North Carolina Central University, like other institutions was and continues to be shaped and influenced significantly by the society in which it exists.

This paper was limited to a discussion of:

1. events relative to the circumstances surrounding the University's founding;
2. circumstances relative to the transition of the University from a private normal school to a public one;
3. the transition of the institution from a public normal school to a public liberal arts college; and
4. events surrounding the establishment of graduate and professional programs.

In this paper the terms, Negro, Afro-American, and Black were used interchangeably and all refer to the same group of the American population. Also, the terms, majority group, White race, group and/or people were used interchangeably and refer to the same section of the American population.

The Founding

In all of the sources pertaining to the origins of North Carolina Central University, 1910 stands unchallenged as the founding year of the University. The writer does not dispute this. An examination of the conditions of the time is essential in order to understand the reasons which motivated James E. Shepard and a few supporters to undertake the awesome task of founding a school.

The nation had come through the Civil War and a frustrating period known

as "the reconstruction period", which, for many southerners, was a time of humiliation and frustration. To the White southerner, "reconstruction" meant the invasion of the south by northerners for the purpose of social, political, and economic exploitation.

Public education for all as an accepted concept caught fire first in New England and, eventually extended to the south. "On the state level, only North Carolina made any significant antebellum progress in the field of public education." (1) These provisions were for White children only. Rabinowitz states that:

> ...The initial southern response was to ignore the Blacks and to move haltingly toward the education of White children at public expense.
>
> ...under the administration of Governor Jonathan Worth, North Carolina abolished its state supported public schools to prevent enrollment of Blacks...(2)

By 1869 it had become apparent that some form of public education was needed in North Carolina. The solution was to have two separate school systems: one White and one Black. Provision for educating the state's children was provided for by members of the North Carolina Constitutional Convention which on its concluding day "sought to allay White fears about integrated schools." Part of a resolution proposed by a Negro member and unanimously adopted stated that: "It is the sense of this convention that the interests and happiness of the two races would be best protected by the establishment of separate schools."(3)

The action of the convention set the tone for public education in North Carolina for decades to come. With very meager resources, the state attempted to maintain two separate school systems: one White and one Black. As could be predicted, the appropriation of funds was not equitable, with a

disproportionate amount of the funds going for support of schools attended by White children and only a small amount going for support of schools attended by Black children.

The closing years of the nineteenth and the initial years of the twentieth centuries in North Carolina are known as the fusion period. It was marked by a resurgence of Black political activity. Unlike the present situation in North Carolina, Blacks of this time rallied to the cause of the Republican Party. This alliance infuriated White democrats. In 1898 when democrats regained political dominance, their first acts were aimed at disfranchising Blacks.

The political climate of the time influenced the direction of James E. Shepard's life. Helen G. Edmonds related that:

> Dr. James E. Shepard served two positions, through federal patronage, during the Fusion period. He was selected by Henry P. Cheatham, former congressman and recorder of deeds in Washington, D.C. for the position of comparer of deeds in Cheatham's office in 1898. He was recalled to Raleigh in early 1899 as deputy collector of the United States Department of Internal Revenue in his state, a position he held until 1905.
>
> Dr. Shepard, born in 1875, reached the legal age of manhood during the Fusion Victory Election of 1896, in which he cast his first vote. He attended the Republican state convention in 1896 and distinguished himself as an intelligent leader. He was ably prepared by intelligence and training to understand fully the issues at stake during the Fusion period, having graduated from Shaw University and the Department of Pharmacy at the same institution at the age of nineteen. He studied theology between 1894 and 1898 thinking that he might follow in the footsteps of his illustrious father, Dr. Augustus Shepard. Employment as a federal office holder delayed his theological career, and when his term of office expired, he entered the field of education. He was the first and only Negro to serve as deputy collector of internal revenue in his state... he alone, escaped the Democratic abuse leveled at Negro office holders.(4)

It was in an atmosphere of economic deprivation, political unrest, and general confusion that North Carolina Central University came into existence

as the National Religious Training School and Chautauqua. The School was the end product of Shepard's political and religious experiences, his astute observations of existing conditions, and his desire to contribute to the advancement of his people. Boyd indicated that:

> ...on the nomination of Mr. N. B. Broughton of Raleigh and Mr. George W. Watts, he had been appointed a member of the International Sunday School Association to represent the interests of the Southern Negro. In his travels he was impressed with two facts: one, that the Negro preachers were poorly prepared for their profession; second, by the methods and program of religious training at Northfield, Massachusetts. He therefore determined to establish in Durham an institution for the efficient and speedy training of Negro ministers and religious workers. With the cooperation of the Merchants Association and Mr. B. L. Duke, thirty acres of land were secured in the Hayti region, while funds for construction and maintenance were drawn from popular subscription in the North as well as in Durham.(5)

From this modest start developed a meaningful program which was intended to enhance the work of the Black minister, who at the time, was the undisputed leader of his people. It was soon realized that many of the ministers were beyond help through the program at the National Training School and Chautauqua, so Shepard revised the purpose and curriculum of his School and "standard courses in academic subjects were introduced, and by 1916 the original objective, training for the ministry, was dropped and a new name, National Training School, was adopted."(6) It was now a secondary and normal school.

From Private to Public Normal School

During the early 1920s, North Carolina began to place more emphasis upon the education of Blacks. A division of Negro education was established. It was described as having "an enlarged staff of White and colored assistants. Mr. Newbold, who has had charge of Negro rural schools in the state for

years, will have charge of the division."(7)

The emphasis of the new program launched by the Division of Negro Education was upon teacher training. The plan authorized that teachers "be prepared at the three state normal schools and the state college for Negroes, at eight or ten private and church schools."(8)

With the "new era" came strong feeling from certain quarters that if the goal of teacher preparation was to be reached, the state needed at least one additional normal school. Editorials which urged that the state purchase the National Training School as its fourth state supported Black normal school began to appear. Shepard and his trustees agreed to sell their School to the state. Thus, North Carolina added another normal school to its growing system.(9)

The legislation provided that:

> The sum of one hundred and fifty thousand dollars ($150,000) is hereby appropriated annually for the support of Negro normal schools. After making provisions for the Elizabeth City Normal School, the Fayetteville Normal School, and the Slater Normal School, the remainder of this amount not appropriated to these three normal schools may be used by the State Board of Education in purchasing and maintaining the National Training School located at Durham - provided the amount paid for the plant shall not exceed fifty thousand dollars ($50,000). These normal schools shall be operated by the State Board of Education, in accordance with the provisions of "an act to place certain normal schools under the control of the State Board of Education", Chapter 61, Public Laws of 1923.(10)

Purchase of the National Training School by the State of North Carolina transformed it into the Durham State Normal School. Power from then on resided in the state officials and the North Carolina legislature. And, its purpose was clearly to train teachers for the elementary schools. To meet this objective the curriculum was completely redesigned.

From Normal School to Liberal Arts College

Soon after the creation of the Durham State Normal School, there arose in the state agitation for the establishment of a liberal arts college for Negroes. Dr. Shepard saw in this movement a great opportunity for the youngest of the normal schools. He began to enlist the assistance of prominent Blacks and members of the majority community in his desire to have his School chosen as the site of the new liberal arts college.

The Durham Morning Herald, one of Durham's two daily majority newspapers joined in the campaign. In an editorial, reasons why the Durham institution should be chosen were given:

> The educational atmosphere here... by reason of Duke University and the nearness of the state university makes it all the more desirable to have the benefit of that environment... Accessibility to the State Capital where it could have more direct contact and be under closer supervision of the State Department of Education is another reason why it should be located here. Railroads and highways radiate from Durham in every direction, making it accessible to all points in the state, and especially the so-called "Black Belt" from which much of the patronage would be drawn. Then, too, there exists a fine class of Negro citizenship in Durham as is to be found in the South or the entire country. The high type of Negro leaders here would provide the needed inspiration and example of leadership that would play such an important part in developing Negro students into teachers who would render the best service to the state and their race. There is also a solid foundation on which to build. That foundation is the National Religious Training School, which gained nation-wide reputation for the work it was doing among Negroes.(11)

From the northeastern section of the state came further support. A college established here,

> "would be planted in as friendly soil as there is in the United States, ...situated near the hospital for the race and the wonderful settlement in the southeastern section of Durham. The worth of the trained, educated and independent Negro is beyond the realm of debate there."(12)

Editorial support was voiced from the Asheville Citizen,(13) a daily

in the western section of the state. Urgings also emanated from the Greensboro Daily News.(14) However, opposition surfaced from Winston-Salem which sought the liberal arts college for that city.(15)

So, only two years after being chosen as the state's fifth Black normal school, another change in direction developed. On February 17, 1925 officials of the North Carolina General Assembly by legislation, changed the mission of the Durham State Normal School to that of a four-year liberal arts college. The name was changed to the North Carolina College for Negroes.(16)

The transition of the Durham State Normal School into the North Carolina College for Negroes perpetuated a continuation of power within the General Assembly of the state. Its purpose was to offer its students a liberal education, therefore again, the curriculum was completely reorganized.

Graduate and Professional Programs

In 1939, the establishment of graduate programs at North Carolina College was authorized by the North Carolina General Assembly. Was this the natural next stage for an institution so young? Had there been pressure and an organized campaign for such programs? The answer to both questions is no. Authorization for the new programs was a reaction by North Carolina officials to an incident which took place in Missouri far away from North Carolina.

Lloyd L. Gaines of St. Louis, Missouri, had appealed to the United States Supreme Court for reversal of his denial of admission to the University of Missouri. The court "ordered Missouri to either: (1) lift its ban on Negroes in the University, or (2) build a new school where Negroes could get the same legal training Missouri gave White students."(17)

At the time the North Carolina legislature created the graduate school, it made provisions for the Department of Law. All preparation for setting up the library and administrative work of the Law School were through the law departments of Duke University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Dean Van Hecke of Chapel Hill accepted the position as dean of the new School for one year. It was agreed that:

> The arrangement whereby... the work of the Law School of the North Carolina College for Negroes will be carried on by the members of the faculties of Duke University and the University of North Carolina should be regarded as temporary and provisional in character, to be continued only until qualified Negroes can be recruited for service. Meanwhile, these representatives of the neighboring law schools are proud of the opportunity to cooperate with the authorities of the North Carolina College for Negroes during the new School's formative period.(18)

A few years after the organization of a graduate school and a law school, a School of Library Science was begun. During the formative years the Library School was operated in the same manner as the Law School had been. Dr. Susan Grey Akers of the Chapel Hill faculty guided the development of the program until a qualified Black person could be found.

The venture into graduate and professional offerings again changed the direction of North Carolina Central University. Its purpose was now to offer both undergraduate and graduate programs of study. To accomplish this, the curriculum was greatly expanded.

Conclusions

The events which took place during the first fifty years of the existence of North Carolina Central University clearly demonstrate how outside influences such as custom, social and political conditions, tend to influence the developmental directions of an institution.

North Carolina Central University's founding grew out of the depressive conditions of the time. Its transition to a public normal school was a result of a need for an additional state normal school to train Black teachers and a well orchestrated campaign carried out by the founder, James E. Shepard. The transition to a liberal arts college was the result of still another campaign and the need for the state to provide a liberal arts program for her Black citizens. And lastly, the authorization for graduate and professional programs was made in order to perpetuate the existing social order which mandated that Blacks and members of the majority group be educated in separate institutions.

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